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Trump's Pre-Christmas Message: Clear and Concise — but Contestable

Anyone following the news is undoubtedly already familiar with at least the contours of the pre-Christmas address that President Donald Trump delivered to the nation on Wednesday, December 17. In a fast-paced speech that lasted less than 20 minutes, Trump focused on the economy, and what he said about it was clear and concise — but also contested.

Trump spoke from the White House, surrounded by festive Christmas decorations that provided an appropriate backdrop for the celebratory message that he delivered regarding the American economy. But of course, his message included not just celebration of his accomplishments but also condemnation of Democratic failures. He began his speech by saying: "Eleven months ago, I inherited a mess, and I'm fixing it." As he continued his remarks, he made clear that the mess was caused by the Democrats. He also celebrated his Big Beautiful Bill and his "favorite word" — tariffs — for improving the economy. He even announced that, because of tariffs and his Big Beautiful Bill, more than 1,450,000 service members will receive a special "warrior dividend" before Christmas "in honor of our nation's founding." And he promised more good tidings to come, observing, "Next year you will also see the results of the largest tax cuts in American history that were really accomplished through our great Big Beautiful Bill, perhaps the most sweeping legislation ever passed in Congress."

In his concluding remarks, he summarized his accomplishments, "Tonight after 11 months our border is secure, inflation is stopped, wages are up, prices are down, our nation is strong, America is respected, and our country is back, stronger than ever before. We're poised for an economic boom the likes of which the world has never seen."

He then observed that next year "we will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence." And he added, "There could be no more fitting tribute to this epic milestone than to complete the comeback of America that began just one year ago. When the world looks at us next year, let them see a nation that is loyal to its citizens, faithful to its workers, confident to its identity, certain to its destiny, and the envy of the entire globe."

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Yes, those are noble goals. But the question that must be asked is: What will America look like on July 4, 2026, when we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our founding? Will the state of our country and of the economy be a "fitting tribute to this epic milestone"? Or will we fall short — and if so, to what extent?

To make modern-day America a "fitting tribute," we must get back to the wisdom of the Founders. That means getting back to the Constitution, which created a government in harmony with the Spirit of 1776.

But this is not what is happening during Trump's second term. The Washington spendathon continues, and so does the explosion in the size of the national debt, to pay for all kinds of unconstitutional programs that the federal government should not be funding — from foreign aid to the social-welfare state. For sure, though the problem is bipartisan, Trump is making his own contribution to the spendathon — including through his Big Beautiful Bill. Yes, the Democrats voted against this bill because they deemed it too small. But Congressman Thomas Massie of Kentucky broke ranks with his Republican colleagues to also vote against the Big Beautiful Bill because he deemed it to be too big. In fact, the bill even provided for raising the national debt limit by trillions of dollars, though that aspect of the bill was hardly trumpeted by Trump.

Ultimately, in order for the American economy to become great again, taxes must be lowered *through less government*. Lowering taxes without reducing the cost of government will inevitably lead to another form of taxation — the *inflation tax*. It cannot be otherwise, since the huge deficits must be monetized — that is, new dollars must be created out of thin air via the Federal Reserve to pay for federal borrowing, and those new dollars diminish the purchasing power of the dollars already in circulation, causing prices to go up.

President Trump boasts that "prices are down." Certainly some prices are down (e.g., the price of gasoline, which has been a beneficiary of Trump's deregulation policies). But prices are not down overall, and the economy is not as robust as Trump is claiming — as many Americans struggling to make ends meet realize. Nor is it even realistic to expect a sustained and growing economic recovery so long as the government spends like there is

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no tomorrow. In fact, without a change in policy, just the opposite will prove to be the case.

Yes, though the president's message was clear, there is plenty in it to contest, especially from a fiscally conservative standpoint. — Gary Benoit

Trump Blockades Venezuela

In the very latest escalation against Venezuela, President Trump has ordered a full blockade of all oil tankers coming and going from the country. In announcing the blockade, Trump designated the Venezuelan government a "FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION" and warned that "Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America. It will only get bigger, and the shock to them will be like nothing they have ever seen before — Until such time as they return to the United States of America all of the Oil, Land, and other Assets that they previously stole from us."

Trump's claim of stolen assets is a reference to a longstanding U.S. grievance dating back to the 1970s, when Venezuela nationalized its oil reserves and confiscated huge amounts of assets belonging to American oil corporations. That action led to decades of legal wrangling, although the Venezuelan government did pay compensation for the original action.

But after oil prices collapsed in the 1980s, American companies, including oil and mining concerns, were invited back in — only to have their assets confiscated anew by the Marxist government of Hugo Chávez, and this time, without compensation.

In 2005, the United States imposed sanctions on Venezuela, which has stopped all oil trade between the two countries, except for a special provision issued by Biden in 2022 allowing Chevron limited access. Because of the U.S. sanctions, Venezuela's oil fields — containing the world's largest known reserves — have been operating at well below capacity, and most Venezuelan oil has been going to China.

Trump's embargo is therefore a blow not only to the Maduro regime, but to China as well. The Maduro regime, accused by Trump of using oil to "finance themselves, drug terrorism, human trafficking, murder, and kidnapping," has vowed to resist American "warmongering," and has ordered its navy to escort oil vessels through the blockade. — Steve Bonta

What About Tariffs?

Even when the federal government is limited to exercising only those legitimate powers authorized by the Constitution, it still will need tax revenue — albeit not nearly as much as the feds are now spending. Tariffs are a legitimate, constitutional way of doing this, and during the early years of the American Republic, they were the U.S. government's primary revenue-raiser. That, of course, was prior to the advent of the federal income tax in 1913.

The case may be made that, even though a tariff is a tax and all forms of taxation take money out of the economy, a tariff is the least objectionable form of taxation — certainly less objectionable than the income tax. But that said, under the Constitution, the power to impose tariffs is assigned to Congress, not the president. Also, ramping up tariff revenue cannot be expected to help the U.S. economy unless other forms of taxation are also reduced, as well as government spending. More overall taxation and spending is not the answer; getting back to constitutional spending is. — Gary Benoit

Chile Elects Conservative as President

The third time proved the charm for Chile's president-elect José Antonio Kast, the conservative politician and son of German immigrants who finally won the Chilean presidency last weekend after two previous attempts. Kast's victory is being hailed by the likes of Argentina's president Javier Milei as the latest in a string of right-wing electoral victories across Latin America. After years of failed Marxist leadership, Chile has joined the growing number of Latin American countries with conservative, anti-socialist, nationalist, and pro-freedom governments, including El Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina, and, most recently, Bolivia. Of particular note are the spectacularly successful governments of Nayib Bukele in El Salvador and Javier Milei in Argentina, both of which have logged mind-boggling socioeconomic results in a relatively brief period, and are prompting the rest of Latin America to take notice. Kast's appeal in Chile is distinctly Bukele-

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esque; he carried every district in the country in a landslide victory driven by promises to oust illegal immigrants, crack down on crime, and erect a northern border wall to stop the flow of migrants from Peru.

Chile, be it noted, is, like its neighbor Argentina, ethnically quite diverse, attracting many immigrants from countries other than Spain. Kast himself is part of a large Chilean-German community; his father served in the German military during World War II and was a Nazi Party member. In 1950, his parents emigrated to Chile. Kast studied law and became involved in politics at a young age as a supporter of benevolent Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

During the Pinochet era and for years thereafter, Chile was politically conservative and anti-communist, despite the unflagging efforts of prominent leftists such as writer Isabel Allende (daughter of ousted Marxist president Salvador Allende) to convince Chileans of the wickedness of Pinochet and the righteousness of Marxism. Chile's economic policies were long influenced by Chicago School-style free-market thinking, resulting in decades of growth and economic stability — a stark contrast with the situation in her larger and more boisterous neighbor and sometime rival, Argentina. But after years of economic stagnation, erosion of individual rights, and soaring crime, the staid Chilean electorate has had enough. While they remain soccer rivals, Chile and Argentina have now locked arms politically, leaving Uruguay as the only remaining country in the "southern cone" with a left-wing government. Kast and Milei are in fact good friends, and one suspects that this election betokens a new era of cooperation between these two great countries.

As for the broader trend, Colombia and Venezuela are the only other Spanish-speaking countries in South America with Marxist governments. Colombia's elections next year are expected to return that traditionally anti-Communist country to Team Freedom, while the developing situation in Venezuela is fluid, to say the least. The most problematic Spanish-speaking country is, ironically, both the largest and the closest, Mexico, which exhibits few signs of relinquishing its generational leftism anytime soon. Then there's Brazil, which, in true Marxist style, has just jailed its main opposition, former President Jair Bolsonaro. Brazil, which was a monarchy (a self-styled "empire") for many years after independence from Portugal, has a much less robust tradition of freedom and individual liberty than the likes of Chile and Argentina, so it is difficult to predict whether the entrenched Marxist regime there will relinquish power even under an electoral mandate.

But the positive takeaway is that freedom is still trending strongly in Latin America, and Chile is a very important new player. — Steve Bonta

EU Parliament Votes to Fund Abortion Access

The European Parliament voted on Wednesday to create an EU fund to support abortion access, the latest attack on national sovereignty and traditional morality by the globalist bloc. *Politico* reports:

> The plan would establish a voluntary, opt-in financial mechanism to help countries provide abortion care to women who can't access it in their own country and who choose to travel to one with more liberal laws. European citizens presented the plan in an EU petition — through the campaign group "My Voice, My Choice."
>
> Lawmakers in Strasbourg voted 358 in favor and 202 against the proposal, and 79 MEPs abstained….
>
> As the Parliament swings to the right in policy areas such as migration and deregulation, this vote is a silver lining for Europe's center left, which has lost leverage following the 2024 EU election.

> Ahead of the vote, many liberal and left-wing MEPs feared the right-wing majority would be able to kill the resolution and substitute it for a watered-down version. However, the Parliament's largest group, the conservative European People's Party, was split — with 71 MEPs voting in favor and 68 against — allowing the original resolution to pass….
>
> Abortion laws vary greatly across Europe, from near-total bans in Poland and Malta to liberal rules in the Netherlands and the U.K. The fund could be a game changer for the thousands of European women who travel every year to another EU country to access abortion care.

The European Union currently leaves abortion up to its individual member states to decide. However, as seen on other issues such as same-sex "marriage," the bloc appears to be moving to extinguish national sovereignty in those areas as well.

As we previously reported in the *Insider Report*, despite the media hype over the establishment European People's Party's (EPP) newfound cooperation with the "far right" in the EU Parliament, the EU appears unlikely to abandon its steady slide toward a "United States of Europe" or its promotion of Marxist cultural policies.

Wednesday's vote demonstrates that mere "reform" of the EU in a more conservative or "right-wing" direction is not enough. Citizens of EU member states must continue pushing for a full dissolution of the globalist bloc, and a complete restoration of national sovereignty. — Peter Rykowski

Is There Already a Cure for Alzheimer's?

Therapies administered to treat Alzheimer's disease could be doing more harm than good, while modern medicine ignores known effective treatments. This is according to a recent post by "A Midwestern Doctor" on *The Forgotten Side of Medicine* Substack.

Alzheimer's is a runaway epidemic in many developed countries and is increasingly prevalent in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is a progressive, neurodegenerative disease that accounts for a majority of dementia cases worldwide, and it is one of the top-ranked causes of death in the United States. It involves the buildup of amyloid (protein) plaques in the brain, which causes memory, reasoning, and behavior problems.

Modern therapies focus on removing those plaques, but according to the Substack *Reversing Alzheimer's: The Forgotten Causes and Cures Big Pharma Buried*, amyloids build up because of a "mechanism the brain uses to protect itself from stressors that endanger brain tissue." So attempting to treat Alzheimer's by eliminating them is "doomed to fail." In other words, mainstream treatment doesn't work because it's treating a symptom, not the source. However, "the money behind this juggernaut has caused research into the real causes of Alzheimer's to be suppressed."

The blog cites three peer-reviewed studies revealing new information that deserves attention:

1. "Reversal of Cognitive Decline: 100 Patients," published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Parkinsonism* in 2018;
2. "Precision Medicine Approach to Alzheimer's Disease: Successful Pilot Project" published in 2022 in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*;" and
3. The 2024 case series "Sustained Cognitive Improvement in Alzheimer's Disease Patients Following a Precision Medicine Protocol" published in the journal *Biomedicines*.

A researcher who took part in each of these studies is Dale E. Bredesen, who teaches at UCLA's medical school in Los Angeles, California, and his eponymous protocol involves applying individually targeted therapies to different cases of Alzheimer's based on their cause.

For Bredesen, plaques are merely a symptom. He identifies six triggers that, over time, play a key role in disease development. They are inflammation, insulin resistance (chronically elevated blood sugar), nutrient and hormonal deficiencies, toxins, blood flow restrictions, and severe or chronic head trauma.

Bredesen's recommended treatments vary based on these causes, but A Midwestern Doctor mentioned a few. "China recently developed a surgery to increase the lymphatic drainage from the brain," he writes, citing studies that show such drainage necessary "to eliminate amyloid from the brain." Doctors have also witnessed impressive results with dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), a compound that is commonly used topically for pain and inflammation relief.

Doctors in more than 125 countries prescribe it for a plethora of other conditions, but the U.S. Food & Drug Administration limits its use. DMSO.org attributes that reticence to the death of a woman in Ireland in 1965. She had taken DMSO with several other drugs and suffered a severe allergic reaction. Though the causative agent was never determined, popular opinion attributed the death to DMSO, and the FDA shut down clinical trials. Since then, no other deaths attributable to DMSO have occurred.

A Midwestern Doctor hopes that the MAHA movement will end the sidelining of such treatments in the United States. — Rebecca Terrell

Is Europe Working Toward Peace or a Wider War?

There's a flurry of activity in Europe. Some of it *appear*s to be attempts at peace in Ukraine. But there are also signs suggesting something else is going on. What is really happening?

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told ABC News on Monday that he was "very much confident" that the two warring nations were "on the precipice" of a peace deal. This aligns with other reports that say the two sides are "90 percent" of the way to an agreement.

This is not the first time we've heard upbeat rhetoric like this. A litany of meetings and "productive" talks since President Donald Trump's second inauguration have ginned up similar optimistic talk and hopes of peace, only to come to naught and be followed by intense fighting.

In this case, Ryabkov is talking about the latest version of the Trump administration's peace agreement, which has been revised several times since news of its draft broke in late November. The plan, which originally included 28 points, has been whittled down considerably, and it's been bounced back and forth between Washington, D.C., Moscow, and a small coalition of highly influential Western European leaders. The latest meetings have been held in Berlin.

Ryabkov said the chance of peace depends on whether the decision-makers on the other side "recognize the inevitable outcome of our success." There has been no sign this has happened. Ukraine and the Europeans are behaving as if Kiev is not losing the war, as if it has leverage to make demands that it has been unable to defend on the battlefield. Trump is irked about this. He told *Politico* last week that Zelensky had to start "accepting things." He also criticized European leaders, who have been whispering into Zelensky's ear to keep fighting "until they drop."

There are two core issues at the center of peace negotiations: Ukraine's ambitions to join NATO and land concessions. Regarding the former, Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday before his meeting in Berlin that he was ready "to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees," according to reports, but only if the West offers "a set of [security] guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members." This is a loaded condition, and reports suggest the United States is working on fulfilling this demand. The Americans are reportedly tweaking the plan to include U.S.-backed protections — measures that would require Senate

backing, according to a *Wall Street Journal* report of the deal.

As for territorial concessions, Zelensky, as he has before, "rejected the U.S. push for ceding territory to Russia."

The Kremlin wants the entire Donbas region and most of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Russia controls most, but not all, of those areas. Ukraine refuses to officially cede *any* territory, and does not seem open to the Trump administration's idea of turning those areas, or part of them, into demilitarized buffer zones. "I do not consider this fair, because who will manage this economic zone?" Zelensky recently said.

The Europeans, unlike the Americans, have consistently urged Ukraine not to budge on territory. Ryabkov was asked about this. Why is Russia asking for more territory than it's been able to take control of?

Ryabkov said that all these regions held referendums in which the people voted to join the Russian federation. This is verifiably true. Yet the Western version of this narrative is that those results cannot be trusted, because the process was overseen by the Russians. It would be more surprising if this part of the world ever hosted any fair elections. Nevertheless, it's not implausible that a region filled with Russian-speaking Ukrainians, many of whom consider themselves Russians, would want to leave a country that has become openly hostile to Russia and the Russian language and culture.

The above is excerpted from Paul Dragu's article at TheNewAmerican.com. Click here to read more.

"Fake Electors Plot" Narrative Moves Forward in Wisconsin Court

A forgery case against two of President Donald Trump's associates is moving forward in Wisconsin after a judge ruled Monday that there is enough evidence to proceed to trial.

The case involves 11 felony charges against Trump's former Wisconsin campaign attorney, Jim Troupis, and the president's director of 2020 Election Day operations, Mike Roman.

Prosecutors assert that Troupis and Roman, along with former Trump attorney Ken Chesebro (whose preliminary hearing has been postponed), created false documents that claimed Trump won Wisconsin in the 2020 election. Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul alleges that the 10 Republican electors who signed the documents were intentionally mislead by the three defendants.

Those charged say the documents were intended to preserve Trump's legal options in case of a court challenge.

Similar cases have been filed in seven battleground states. A judge in Michigan recently dismissed his state's case against 15 defendants who were charged with impersonating electors to certify Trump as the victor in 2020; he said the state failed to prove intent.

Likewise, last month a Georgia prosecutor dropped election-interference charges against Trump and his associates. But legal experts point out that the Wisconsin case is different; its defendants are supposedly the brains behind the "fake electors plot" that spread from Wisconsin to other swing states.

Meanwhile, Wisconsin Republican U.S. Senator Ron Johnson has written to U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi, requesting a Justice Department investigation into allegations by Troupis of misconduct on the part of the judge overseeing his case.

Additionally, Trump issued pardons in November for everyone accused of trying to overturn the 2020 elections. This includes Troupis, Roman, and Chesebro, but only protects them against federal prosecution.

For full details about the so-called fake electors story, watch *The Eastman Dilemma: Lawfare or Justice* by Madison Media. — Rebecca Terrell

Brazil's Congress Votes to Cut Bolsonaro's Prison Term

In a bit of very good news from Marxist Brazil, the Congress, which has a strong conservative majority, voted on Wednesday night to reduce the 27-year prison sentence of former president Jair Bolsonaro to just over two years, an outcome that may allow Bolsonaro to return to Brazilian politics. Brazil's Marxist leader Lula da Silva has already announced his intent to veto the bill, but Congress probably has the numbers to override the veto.

Bolsonaro's family, who argued for a full exoneration, indicated that they were satisfied that the result "wasn't exactly what we wanted … but it's what was possible." Those words were from Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, Jair's son and political heir apparent. Bolsonaro was tried and imprisoned as a result of post-electoral protests in Brasilia similar to the January 6 protests in the United States. But unlike Trump, Bolsonaro was unable to fight effectively against leftist lawfare and the Brazilian legal cartel. Now, at least, it appears that he has been saved from dying in prison, but whether Jair will ever be rehabilitated politically is impossible to say.

Many Brazilians, for their part, must be looking at the goings-on in neighboring Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile with envious eyes, as much of Spanish-speaking Latin America seems to be moving toward liberty and away from decades of collectivism — while Brazil remains mired, alongside the likes of Venezuela and Cuba, in seemingly intractable socialist tyranny. — Steve Bonta

Agenda 2030 in Small Town U.S.A.

The United Nations' Agenda 2030 is becoming reality for cities and towns across the country. A recent example from small-town Arkansas comes to us from a resident, who writes:

> Our city council has adopted a plan called Discover Paragould 2042. It's modeled after Rogers and Bentonville in Arkansas, and Oxford, Mississippi, as well as several cities served by the Orion Group, a smart growth city planning company. The full plan for us can be found at https://www.discoverparagould2042.com/.
>
> The city of Paragould essentially wants to turn us into a big homeowners association, where nobody owns a yard and everything is in walking distance (as in 15-minute cities). One businessman has called the plan "regulations on steroids." But few people are paying attention, so this is going to happen. I'm actually about to move away so that I don't end up having to live in a townhouse and sharing a pocket park or courtyard with 20 other families.

This is blatant Agenda 2030 in action. Of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the 11th aims to make "human settlements" sustainable. This is code for 15-minute cities — a term introduced following the 2015 UN Climate Conference. The plan is to herd people into urban areas where everything they need is within a 15-minute walk or bicycle ride, and travel outside the "district" will be restricted. Some cities are already transforming into these open-air prisons; residents of Oxford, England, are required to obtain a permit to cross six major roads that demarcate the city's zones. Urban planners are also building these future detention centers from the ground up. An example is the LEAP Project outside Lebanon, Indiana, funded by the state in cooperation with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, which has offices in Germany, Japan, South Korea, China, Israel, Italy, and the U.K.

President Joe Biden boosted the 15-minute-city agenda in 2021 only six days after his inauguration, issuing an executive order that called for conservation (i.e., government takeover) of "at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030" to "tackle the climate crisis." This "30x30" initiative is part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which aims to gobble up "conserved" land for SDG 15, which favors "green" over reliable energy, and endangered species over livestock. This goal is already threatening farmland across the United States with eminent domain for boondoggles such as solar, wind, and carbon capture, all backed by hefty government subsidies.

But the plan has been in place for much longer. President George H.W. Bush signed the United States on to

Agenda 21 at the 1992 Earth Summit. His successor, Bill Clinton, formed a Council on Sustainable Development, naming J. Gary Lawrence as lead advisor. Lawrence explained "The Future of Local Agenda 21 in the New Millennium" in the September 1998 issue of the council's publication, *The Millennium Papers*. But, he warned, the name Local Agenda 21 in the United States would "bring out many of the conspiracy-fixated groups and individuals." His solution: "We call our processes something else, such as comprehensive planning, growth management or smart growth."

UN-inspired comprehensive plans are now ubiquitous. New York City's "OneNYC 2050," "Imagine Austin" in Texas, "OurLA2040" in California, and "We Will Chicago" are just a few examples on the home front, while "The London Plan," "Metro Vancouver 2040," "Plan Melbourne 2017-2050," and Singapore's "Master Plan" reveal that no corner of the globe is left untouched.

Tentacles entwine small towns and rural areas, too. Durango, Colorado's comprehensive plan is filled with telling catchphrases such as "socio-economic diversity," "sustainable behavior," and the "unsustainability of transportation based on single occupancy vehicles." Otsego County, New York, even offers *Comprehensive Plan Samples and Tools*, downloadable from its website. Look into what your local city council or county commission has adopted, and you will probably find similar fingerprints, such as those in Paragould, Arkansas. It's just as likely that your local representatives are innocently unaware of the internationalist origins, so plan to collaborate with rather than confront them to free your community of these globalist traps. — Rebecca Terrell

Year-end Congressional Update

As Congress wraps up work before the year ends, here are the latest developments and what we can expect next year:

- **NDAA:** As we covered in last week's *Insider Report*, Congress released the final bill text for the fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). On Wednesday, the Senate voted 77-20 to pass the NDAA, sending it to President Trump for his signature. As we noted last week, the bill is a mixed bag; although it contains some good provisions, it is also riddled with unconstitutional provisions while leaving out important measures such as the Anti-CBDC Surveillance State Act. It is a good reminder of the problematic nature of omnibus-style legislation.

- **Healthcare:** Negotiations on whether — or how — to extend the enhanced ObamaCare subsidies remain ongoing. Last week, the Senate rejected both Democratic and Republican proposals, while the House passed the GOP proposal on Wednesday. As of this writing, the subsidies appear set to expire on January 1 — even if the House passes a clean extension, after members secured enough signatures to force a vote — although Republicans and Democrats are continuing to discuss a "bipartisan" extension. Regardless of the outcome, constitutionalists should not expect a "solution" that brings us closer to constitutional adherence.

- **Nominations:** The Senate has made notable progress in confirming Trump's nominees, with a total of about 420 nominees confirmed this year. (By contrast, Joe Biden saw 365 nominees confirmed by the end of 2021.) Although the Senate put considerable time and effort into confirming nominees this year, the bulk of the confirmations happened due to a rules change, enacted in September, that allowed senators to confirm multiple nominees simultaneously. Although legislative action is far more consequential, these confirmations

will help ensure that Trump can advance his agenda across the sprawling — and unconstitutional — federal bureaucracy. One negative note: Trump has been relatively lackluster in making federal judicial nominations.

- **Filibuster and blue slips:** Despite Trump's vocal support for ending the Senate filibuster and blue-slip tradition, there appears to be little support among Senate Republicans for ending either. Their main concern appears to be that Democrats, the next time they gain power, will use such rules changes against the GOP. In fairness, considering the current makeup of congressional Republicans, it is unlikely they would accomplish anything substantial and/or constitutional without the filibuster.

- **Next year's agenda:** When Congress returns in January, it will have several matters to deal with. First, with federal funding — provided under a continuing resolution enacted in November — scheduled to expire on January 30, Congress must negotiate new appropriations legislation. Unfortunately, as we have seen repeatedly earlier this year, little appetite for cutting spending exists in Congress. Additionally, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-La.) has promised to pass legislation to codify up to 150 of Trump's executive orders. Congress previously codified certain orders in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) and the fiscal 2026 NDAA, but its ability to codify additional orders is doubtful without a reconciliation bill or bipartisan omnibus bill. Speaking of reconciliation bills, Congress will consider whether to pass a second or third one next year as follow-ups to the OBBBA, a plan that would allow the GOP to enact tax or healthcare changes without Democratic input. Although congressional leadership appears to be seriously considering this option, it's unclear whether there is enough GOP unity to follow though — and even if there is, the OBBBA's negotiation demonstrates the lack of desire to meaningfully cut federal spending and regulations. Will the GOP squander yet another opportunity? Time will tell.

As a new year begins, be sure to regularly contact your U.S. representative and senators — through phone calls, in-person meetings, and attending town hall meetings — and urge them to vote in accordance with the U.S. Constitution. Use the *Freedom Index* and *Scorecards* to educate them and their constituents about their records and constitutional principles. — Peter Rykowski

NYMHM: News You May Have Missed

Trump Ratchets Up Regime-change Pressure in Venezuela

FAFSA Mandates: Federal Overreach Masquerading as Help for Students

Trump Aggravates MAGA Base With Nasty Post About Murder of Rob Reiner

Affordability Crisis? Perspective and Propaganda

Trump Blocks Entry From Nearly Three Dozen Problem Nations

Trump Pardons “Election Denier” Tina Peters, but State Officials Aren’t Releasing Her

Omar Calls Inquiries Into Marital History “Sick,” Responds to Allegations of Immigration Fraud

How AI & Data Are Being Used Against You & Liberty — and How to Respond

A Tale of Two Warnings: Orwell’s *1984* Comes True in Martin’s Fabian Freeway

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